

VZCZCXRO8414
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA RUEHTRO
DE RUEHNK #0715/01 3391215
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041215Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7903
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0295
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0349
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0679
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1892
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0373
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0415
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0790

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 NOUAKCHOTT 000715

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ABDALLAHI'S UNDELIVERED MAURITANIAN NATIONAL DAY
SPEECH

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 707

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 696

[1](#)1. (U) President Abdallahi was supposed to deliver an address to the nation on Mauritanian National Day (November 28). However, he was prevented from doing so by security forces that arrived and banned journalists from entering his village (Ref A). A text of the speech was released by the FNDD to the media instead, and received moderate coverage in the press. In his speech, Abdallahi offered no new initiatives or proposals towards resolving the crisis, preferring instead to expand on themes that he put forth in his first address to the nation November 21 (Ref B). He listed the gains made under his administration, particularly with respect to securing international assistance and foreign investment, and called on Mauritians to "continue this fight together" to "defeat this power grab by force."

[1](#)2. (U) The following text is an English translation of the original French:

BEGIN TEXT

My dear compatriots,

I speak to you today, on this forty-eighth anniversary of the Independence of our country while it goes through a particularly serious stage of its history.

Serious, in fact, because the hopes that were born from the last legislative and presidential election that should have enabled our people to finally start up, thanks to the institutional stability and the national concord, on the path of an economic, social, and culturally sustainable development, were blown into pieces on August

[1](#)6. The ambition of a man has put an end, by force, to constitutional legality, trampling underfoot the popular will translated through the verdict of ballot boxes as well as the commitments made before the international community.

This verdict gave me a mandate, according to the program upon which you elected me, to initiate in all areas an innovative policy that broke with the policies and customs of the past.

That is how I forbade myself from the solitary exercise of power, giving to the government and other institutions of the State the fullness of their prerogatives, just as I gave to the heads of the armed and security forces determined support and a complete

confidence in all matters touching on security.

Trying hard to be the President of all my fellow countrymen, I conferred often with the political and social actors of the country whether they were from the majority, or the opposition, or economic operators. I also tried to make myself available to my fellow countrymen and to hold with each one the language of respect and benevolence, but always the one of truth, far from any demagoguery as well as from any authoritarianism.

I know that this attitude could have sometimes been interpreted by some, accustomed as they were to decades to personal powers and the cult of the State, as a sign of weakness, but in fact it was a deliberate will to foster a new political culture in the country, based on the freedom and dignity of the citizen.

As for the majority which, until the launching of the provoked crisis, was supporting the government action, I had asked it to act as a stimulus and a critic of the government action, and not as a blind and sycophantic supporter of this action. At the same time, the opposition was enjoying all the guarantees that were conferred to it by the law and all the consultations with power that it wished to have.

Furthermore, restoring the national concord through the return of the refugees, achieving the social emancipation by criminalizing slavery in order to reinforce the unity of our people, as well as the rebuilding of the State of law in all its aspects, were undertaken as the beginnings for any economic and social development.

NOUAKCHOTT 00000715 002 OF 004

On the economic level, as everyone knows, the situation just after my inauguration was, to say the least, worrying. Heavy constraints weighed on the public finances, with a total debt of the State of nearly 700 billion ouguiyas (approximately \$2.7 billion), of which nearly a third was in the form of internal debt corresponding to treasury commitments and debts of major public enterprises. The initial budget of 2007 showed an unexpected deficit of nearly 30 billion ouguiyas (approximately \$115.4 million), nearing the amount of the investment budget on domestic resources. Difficulties in supplying potable water and electrical energy, in Nouakchott as well as in the interior, made living conditions difficult and handicapped economic activity. The education system was not able to meet its mission of training and educating in response to the economic and social demands of the country. At the same time, most of the indicators of our health system were alarming.

Therefore, it was absolutely necessary and a priority to conceive economic and social reforms appropriate to this situation, matched with a public investment program, to ensure basic social services, with the purpose of fighting poverty and achieving a more sustained and distributive economic growth. Naturally, mobilizing the appropriate financing as well as the institution of a climate attractive for international private investment and favorable to the competitiveness of our private enterprises were the major challenges.

Our efforts towards this aim have, thank God, been crowned with success because, in less than seven months, we prepared a three-year investment program and obtained funding for an amount in the order of 3 billion dollars among which 2.5 billion was from outside participation. The already-signed agreements total 600 million dollars.

Moreover, we have noted serious intent from private foreign investors to invest an amount in the order of 6 billions dollars.

All this was able to be obtained thanks to our three-year development program, the exemplary nature of our democracy, and to our clear orientations with respect to governance reform.

For basic services, we were able in few months to alleviate the most urgent problems in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou by ensuring the regular supply of electricity and by reinforcing the Idini water pipe which

allowed us to avoid in 2008 the problems we experienced in 2007 right after the naming of the first government. For the middle and long term we have been able to obtain, in record time, an additional funding of 217 million dollars allowing us to realize the Aftout Essahli Project. Likewise, we have obtained funding for an additional capacity of 60 megawatts and commitments for installing a total capacity of 160 megawatts with a large power station in Nouakchott before the recently started discussions with PETRONAS for the construction of a gas power station with 700-megawatt output.

Inside the country, the emergency hydraulic program enabled us to protect dozens of villages and towns from the drought that threatened them during 2007 and 2008. Additional progress was expected with the financing of the Dhar Project from which the towns of Nema, Timbedra, Amourj, and Adelbagrou were going to benefit, and with the construction of the electrical transport line from Rosso to Boghe.

Road infrastructure was of particular interest. Financing agreements were already signed for an amount of nearly 270 million dollars for the rehabilitation of the roads between Kiffa and Tintane and between Nouakchott and Rosso as well as the remainder of the funding of the road between Atar and Tidjikja. The Nouakchott port, blocked for several years, must have an extension which will have the effect of doubling its intake capacity.

In the area of food security, we confronted the unsurpassed world wide increase in the prices of foodstuffs and oil products by implementing a Special Program of Intervention which, of unanimous opinion of the specialists in the domain, including the IMF, FAO, and other United Nations agencies, is exemplary on several accounts.

Besides securing supplies, the stabilization of the prices of the main foodstuffs, and the significant increase of wages, this program initiated a new policy of the rural sector whose results will be translated this year into an unprecedented level of production, in comparison to the results of past agricultural campaigns, and in a

NOUAKCHOTT 00000715 003 OF 004

longer term by the self-sufficiency in cereals by 2012 thanks to the realization of agrarian development projects whose discussions for financing with our foreign partners were already in an advanced stage.

In the area of fighting youth unemployment, an insertion program of nearly 4000 unemployed youngsters was enacted, including their professional training and implementing micro-credit lines.

As for the promotion of women, it found its illustration in the appointment of more women in the Government and the designation, for the first time in our country, of women in the positions of Chief of Diplomatic Mission and Territorial Command. Moreover, important financing of income-generating activities for the benefit of women were put in place in all the provinces of the country.

Concerning housing, priority was given to solving the problem of "precarious" neighborhoods (Gazra and Kebba) in the outskirts of towns. In this area, the populations of the districts of El Mina, Arafat, and Nouadhibou have already been able to benefit from areas with basic services in 2007 and 2008. This policy is planned to continue in the other neighborhoods of Nouakchott.

In the area of education, important reforms were started to improve the living and working conditions of the teachers and students (improving the remuneration of the teaching corps, distribution of equipment and school supplies, and so on). The establishment of a preparatory commission for education should have led to a profound reform of the education system as an organization in total agreement with economic, cultural, and social data of the country.

In the domain of health, the Government set to work improving health coverage through the construction and rehabilitation of equipment in health centers in six regions, revaluating and strengthening human resources, and fighting against major diseases.

On the external level and thanks to the successful restructuring of our country with democratic values, Mauritania enjoyed a certain

aura in the world, in particular in our Islamic, Arab, and African environment. Because of that, our contribution in the construction of the Arab Maghreb, our role within the African Union, the Arab States League, and the Islamic Conference were reinforced, as was our position as partner to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

My dear compatriots,

Certainly, our country harbors important treasures but their exploitation cannot be done efficiently without the support of our partners in development and the intervention of the private sector, national and foreign. By this support which we had acquired, the country had started moving towards a vigorous economic and social development.

The coup d'etat perpetrated on August 6, 2008 has put these promising prospects in danger. On top of that, it risks, if it is not defeated, to deprive the Mauritanian people of the political tranquility they have experienced for more than a year, and to plunge the country back into the abyss of an opaque military dictatorship.

In taking our people hostage, the putsch perpetrators attempt, through a policy of the carrot and stick, to project to the world an image of universal consensus. The successive coups that occurred since 1978 have extensively demonstrated the fallacious character of this facade.

Our people, who had begun developing a taste for freedom and recovering their dignity, are firmly committed in the struggle for defending democracy. The restrictions of freedoms, the repression, the harassments, persecutions as well as charges under the most unreliable pretexts of the leaders of the National Front for the Defense of Democracy -- notably the Prime Minister as well as high personalities including a member of the Government and several former Ministers -- will not be able to dissuade us.

My dear compatriots,

Through the political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations, you have decided to confront the arbitrary and blind

NOUAKCHOTT 00000715 004 OF 004

force of the putschists to preserve your gains in democracy and freedom that you know constitute the basis for any sustainable economic and social development.

The International Community, which demands the return to constitutional order, provides important support to your fight.

We should therefore firmly continue this fight together, by all peaceful means, in order to defeat this power grab by force, to restore the constitutional order, and to establish a system of peaceful transfer of power which allows us to devote ourselves in all peace of mind to combating poverty and improving the living conditions of our people. This will allow us to jump-start development, already begun during the previous period, and correct our possible mistakes.

As I already announced and as I intend to reaffirm in a few days to the representatives of the international community, the defeat of the coup of August 6, 2008, is the essential condition for any definite solution to the crisis that the country is presently in.

Placing the interests of my country above any personal considerations, I would like to reiterate here my availability, as soon as this putsch is defeated, to working towards a solution in a spirit of great tolerance, far removed from the settling of accounts.

Long live a free, democratic, and prosperous Mauritania!

END TEXT

HANKINS